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Flint school board holds secret meetings

According to information obtained through an investigation by the FLINT VOICE, the Flint Board of Education has apparently held a number of illegal, secret meetings throughout the past few months. This practice culminated at a secret meeting on Monday, December 5th in the barring of

FLINT VOICE reporters and photographers, teachers, students, parents and, in a rare move, two members of the school board who demanded that the meeting be opened up to the public.

Daniel Kildee and Linda Dapper, both elected to the board this past June, were told that there was to be an Employee Relations Committee meeting at the Sarvis Center on the 5th to discuss the Superintendent's evaluation and salary. Feeling that such information should be open to the public's scrutiny, Kildee and Dapper decided to attend the meeting and, with a quorum present, attempted to make it an open session. When they arrived at Sarvis, they found that the meeting had been moved to an office in the administration building. Upon arrival at the meeting they found six board members present discussing various issues. The meeting was called to order by committee chairman Paul Newman at which time he ordered all persons not a part of the committee out of the room. Kildee, Dapper, two other



School Board members Dan Kildee and Linda Dapper attempt to open up a closed meeting.



The door is closed as the public's business becomes private.

board members, UTF president Hal Keim and FLINT VOICE staff members all left the meeting under protest.

After a long discussion out in the hallway about the illegality and immorality of this action, Kildee and Dapper walked back into the meeting declaring, "this meeting should be opened to the public." While Kildee held the door open so that members of the public and press could enter, Newman punched Kildee's arm off the door, slammed it and shouted, "This is my meeting and I'll run it how I see fit. I don't need you standing over my shoulder telling me how to run my committee. I resent your behavior, young man."

(Kildee became the first 18 year old elected to public office in Flint's history when he won his position on the school board.)

After much arguing, Kildee and Dapper left the meeting, obviously

shaken from the humiliation of being kicked out of what they were supposed to be equal members of.

"This meeting is a sham and a disgrace," Kildee stated. "I will not be part of hiding information from the public nor any lawbreaking on the part of this board."

"When I was elected I promised to open up the doors of our government. I will continue to fight this denial of the people's right to know."

The expulsion of Kildee and Dapper from the meeting violated the board's own by-laws which say that any member of the board may attend a committee meeting. More important, though, there was a quorum of the board present behind closed doors discussing issues of board concern. This is in direct violation to the Open Meetings Act passed last year according to a spokesperson from the Attorney General's office.

The Open Meetings Act stated that:

- all meetings of public bodies have to be open with public notice posted 16 hours in advance.

- closed meetings can only be held by a 2/3 vote of the board and only to discuss lawsuits, purchase of property, negotiations and the contents of an application for employment. Closed sessions may also be held to discuss suspension, dismissal or disciplining of a student or employee if the student or employee requests it.

- a 'meeting' is defined as any gathering of a quorum where there is deliberating or a decision is made.
- those guilty of holding illegal meetings are subject to fines and jail terms.

On Monday, November 14th, the Flint School Board held a secret meeting in the administration building to